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COMMERCIAL ASPECT OF THE YELLOW PERIL.

BY ALLEYNE IRELAND.

THE present widespread interest in China is due to sensational causes; but these causes, deplorable as they are in themselves, may yet serve the useful purpose of so fixing public attention on the Celestial Empire as to ensure a solution, by one method or another, of the great and urgent problem which the future progress of China presents to the world. It is not too much to hope that the recent Chinese atrocities will give that spur to common international action, without which the situation in the Far East would have passed from one stage of complexity to another, with an increasing probability that, when an outbreak occurred, the final settlement would be effected rather with a view to satisfying the ambitions of a single victorious Power, than with the object of safeguarding the general interests of the civilized world.

In the present day of telegraphic communication, our attention is diverted from one part of the globe to another with a rapidity which forbids concentration on any single issue in which our national interests are involved. We turn from Venezuela to Alaska, from Alaska to Manila, from Manila to the Transvaal, from the Transvaal to China; and when, in addition to watching these foreign matters, a nation is called upon to take up a number of important internal questions affecting every class of interests, it is little to be wondered at that there is often a failure to keep pace with the progress of certain great movements which, important as we realize them to be, fail, from the very sluggishness of their course, to chain our attention. The progress of China is one of these movements. Whilst we have been occupied for years with the noisy avalanches of less important matters, this Chinese question has stolen upon us with the slow but terrible advance of a glacier. The attacks on the Legations in Peking,

an atrocity scarcely paralleled in the history of the world, is simply one of the avalanches accompanying the great, slow, central movement; and, in exacting reparation for this outrage, the fact should not be lost sight of that it is only a symptom, and that mere compensation and reprisal will still leave untouched the greater issue behind—the future of China and the Chinese people.

It is not my present purpose to examine the prospects of China's political future, in the light of the conflicting ambitions of the Great Powers; such an inquiry, however exhaustive in its nature, would only lead me back to the point from which I wish to start, namely—the consideration of the Chinese people as a factor in human progress. This method of approach appears to possess some considerable advantage over the other from the fact that, whereas the policy of the Great Powers toward China must be finally limited and determined by the attitude of China as a nation, the social and industrial development of the Chinese, as a people, could only be to some extent advanced or retarded, in point of time, by any conceivable political change effected by the intrusion of the Great Powers.

If the Chinese were a people like the Russians, the Germans or the French, we (I address chiefly American and British readers) would observe any marked increase in their industrial activity or in their national aggressiveness with some misgiving, possibly, but certainly without any feeling that our own national existence, either social or economic, was seriously threatened by what we would be compelled to regard as a progressive movement in a fellow nation. We would flatter ourselves that what a Russian, or a German, or a Frenchman could do, an American or an Englishman could do at least as well.

But it is precisely because the Chinaman differs from all other men, that the prospect of a radical change in the Chinese life and policy is viewed, by many intelligent observers, with an interest not unmixed with alarm.

If I do not share the view held by some, that China is destined to become the greatest active power in the world, it is rather because of the hope that the concerted action of the Great Powers will limit the expansion of China to those regions in the Tropics where she would have all white races at a disadvantage, than of any belief that the Chinaman, if left to himself, is incapable of developing the necessary amount of self-assertion.

If we supplement an estimate of the dynamic potentiality of the Chinese people, by an examination of some of the natural and artificial forces which are likely to extend or to limit the area of Chinese activity, we may form some idea of the problem which would be created by the wholesale adoption by the Chinese of those material aids to progress which we have so persistently endeavored to thrust upon their unwilling attention.

China, with her dependencies, covers an area of 4,460,000 square miles and has a population of about 400,000,000; in other words, her people represent one-fourth of the population of the globe, spread over about one-twelfth of its land surface. The land varies in fertility and in mineral resources in the different Provinces; but it is certain that the country contains the largest coal and iron deposits within the territory of any single nation. Von Richtofen, the German geologist, estimates that the single Province of Shan-se could supply the whole world's requirements in coal and iron, at the present rate of consumption, for three thousand years. And the productiveness of the soil is, at least, equal to that of any equal area in the world.

Up to the present time, the vast resources of the Chinese Empire, with millions of hands on the spot to develop them, have been practically closed to the world. The insignificance of the export trade of China, when compared with that of other nations, will be seen from the following rough calculation:

EXPORTS OF DOMESTIC PRODUCE IN 1897.

	Dollars.	Per Capita.
China	120,000,000	\$0.30
United Kingdom.....	1,170,000,000	29.25
France.....	719,000,000	18.43
Germany.....	890,000,000	17.11
United States.....	1,032,000,000	14.74

From these figures, it is seen that the average value of the annual exports *per capita* from the four Western nations is \$19.88, as compared with 30 cents *per capita* from China. If we give China the benefit of a probable over-estimate of population, and of a possible under-estimate of exports, and if we place the exports at 40 cents *per capita*—a liberal allowance—we observe that, at the present time, it takes fifty Chinamen to place on the world's market an amount of produce equal to that distributed by one American or one European.

It would, of course, be mere guesswork to try and estimate the exact effect which the general introduction of machinery, of im-

proved agricultural methods, and of adequate transportation facilities would have upon the export returns of that country; but, within certain limits, such a speculation may be sufficiently near the truth to afford a basis for some general deductions.

Let us suppose, then, that during the next ten years China adopts Western methods, to an extent which would still leave one white man equal to five Chinamen in productive efficiency; the result would be, basing our calculation on the figures given above, that China's exports would amount to not less than \$1,600,000,000, a sum equal to the total combined value of domestic exports from Germany and France in 1897, and representing seventy-five per cent. of the total exports from the United States and the United Kingdom together.

It may be suggested that China would find a difficulty in securing markets for such a great quantity of produce, because in some countries a strong prejudice exists against Chinese goods, and it might be expected that many countries would erect formidable tariffs against Chinese manufactures. If we admit that these factors would play some part in determining the quantity and direction of Chinese exports, and that the prejudice against Chinese goods would probably operate to keep down a Chinese export trade to the United States, to Australasia and Canada, and to a lesser extent to France and Germany, the fact must not be overlooked that a Chinaman can outwork and underlive any other worker in the world, and that this circumstance would enable him to appeal, even in countries most hostile to him, to the preference of the majority of people for the cheaper product.

The question of Chinese trade development, however, is not primarily one of competition with the white man in his home markets, but rather of a rivalry with Europe, America and Australasia, in the Tropical and sub-Tropical markets. The importance of this fact becomes more apparent, if we consider the general prospects of trade development in the future. A moment's reflection serves to satisfy us that, whatever increase may be looked for in the trade of the European countries, of North America and of non-Tropical Australasia, a vastly greater proportional development may be expected in the trade of the Tropical and sub-Tropical countries. The white man at home has reached such a high degree of efficiency as a producer and as a consumer that it cannot be foreseen that the rate of progress to

be observed during the last century will be maintained during the century upon which we are about to enter. The people of the Tropics, on the other hand, are still in a very low state of productive efficiency, and their value as consumers is proportionately small. I have shown elsewhere* that, in the British Empire, the productive efficiency of the Tropical as compared with the non-Tropical man is as 1 to 23, and that the value of the former as a consumer is as 1 to 17, compared with the value of the latter. It is certain, moreover, that in the Tropics outside the British Empire—under less efficient forms of government, and with less protection for the products of industry—the economic value of the Tropical man is even less than this.

Concisely, the formula which I would deduce from the above facts is this, that the difference between actual and normally potential economic efficiency is so much greater in the Tropical man than in the non-Tropical man, that the trade of the former could be doubled in the time which would be required to raise the trade of the latter by thirty per cent.

Now, even if we omit from our calculations the possibility—which will be examined later—of large portions of the Tropics and of the sub-Tropics becoming preponderatingly Chinese in the composition of their population, it is clear that in these markets we shall be compelled to enter into an open rivalry with Chinese products. The areas in which the competition of a vitalized Chinese trade would be most likely to affect American and European exports are these: India, Ceylon, Burmah, Siam, the Straits Settlements, Borneo, New Guinea, the Pacific Islands, Tropical Africa, Mauritius, Brazil, Peru, Chile, the Central American Republics, Ecuador, Bolivia and Venezuela. It should be noted that, in each of these countries, the Chinaman could settle and thrive, and that, in some of them, he has already done so, whilst in most of them the white man can never be more than a temporary resident.

The commercial problem created by the prospect of an economic awakening of China may be said to consist, in its simplest form, in the possible exclusion of the white race from participation in the advantages which would follow an increase in the economic efficiency of the Tropical and of the sub-Tropical peoples.

* "Tropical Colonization," pp. 110, 111.

Up to this point, however, we have considered only the effect which a simple economic development of China, unaccompanied by other great changes in the national life and policy, would have upon the commercial prospects of the white nations. If we now introduce a new factor, namely, a possible change in the social economy or habit of the Chinese people, we find that the commercial problem becomes greatly complicated.

It is a curious fact that, notwithstanding the general spread of education, the vast majority of people appear to have but a slight knowledge of the geography of the earth. For instance, my own experience has been that not more than one person out of five, among educated people to whom I have put the inquiry, have known that Liverpool is to the east of Edinburgh, that Calcutta is within a few miles of being in the North Temperate Zone, and that Glasgow is in the same latitude as Southern Alaska. I refer to this, because I imagine that many of the popular misconceptions about the physiological and psychological make-up of the Chinaman are to be traced to a general impression that the Chinese are a Tropical people. Of course, when we deliberately set out to consider the matter, we realize at once that only a small part of China lies within the Tropics, and that a great part of the Empire enjoys a winter at least as severe as that of New England. But, for most people, the Chinaman falls into the same category as the Filipino, the Bengalee and the Negro, and only those who have had reason to pay some attention to Chinese affairs bear constantly in mind the fact that the climatic discipline of the Chinaman has been that of the Frenchman, the German, the Austrian, the American and the Briton.

It is most important that we should place the Chinaman where he belongs geographically, unless we wish to fall into the error of supposing that, as a factor in future industrial competition and in the coming struggle for race supremacy, he is no more to be taken into account than the East Indian or the Negro.

Now, what manner of man is the Chinaman in point of fact? He has been described over and over again by hundreds of writers; but I select three brief descriptions, in order that we may have a clear conception of him before we proceed to discuss the prospect of his social expansion. Says His Excellency Wu Ting-Fang, the Chinese Minister at Washington:

“Experience proves that the Chinese as all-around laborers can

easily distance all competitors. They are industrious, intelligent and orderly. They can work under conditions that would kill a man of less hardy race; in heat that would suit a salamander or in cold that would please a polar bear, sustaining their energies through long hours of unremitting toil, with only a few bowls of rice.*

Reinsch, in his "World-Politics at the End of the Nineteenth Century," says:

"The Chinese are an active, energetic race. For ages there has been with them a survival of the hardiest. Trained from youth to subsist on the most meagre diet, to get along with little sleep, and to work patiently for twelve or fourteen hours a day, these men scoff at difficulties and exertions which would within a year weary a European to death."

Lafcadio Hearn thus described the Chinese:

"A people of hundreds of millions disciplined for thousands of years to the most untiring industry and the most self-denying thrift, under conditions which would mean worse than death for our working masses—a people, in short, quite content to strive to the uttermost in exchange for the simple privilege of life."†

Such is the man; and, when we consider the area of his usefulness, we are confronted with the fact that he can live and thrive and multiply in any part of the habitable world, whilst the white man, if he is to retain his race characteristics, must always remain a bird of passage in almost every country lying between 30° N. and 30° S.

If we reject the possibility of the Chinese ever penetrating in force either to the North or to the South of the above limit, we are still forced to admit that the higher races cannot hope to people any of the Northern Hemisphere outside of Europe, North America and Russian Asia, and that the whole of the Southern Hemisphere, with the exception of the non-Tropical Australasia and, possibly, of Cape Colony and Natal, must derive its future population from what we loosely call the lower races. It is significant that, even in the United States and in Australasia, countries in which the white man has the best possible chance of development, and in which he has least to fear from the competition of alien races, the dread of the Chinaman has found expression in stringent legislation limiting his immigration.

Fortunately, up to the present time, the Chinese people have turned their eyes away from extensive emigration, and have thus

*North American Review, July, 1900.

†Atlantic Monthly, April, 1896.

failed to use efficiently their superior physiological adaptability. This neglect of opportunity is attributable to a great variety of causes, most of which are sufficiently well understood by students of sociology. Amongst the most obvious may be named the extent and natural resources of the home territory, which have rendered emigration from economic motives unnecessary; the intense conservatism of the Chinese people, due in a great measure to the fact that, until within the present century, China has been absolutely self-sufficient and has had little intercourse with foreign nations; the disinclination of the Chinaman to separate himself from his associates in the innumerable secret societies the protection of which constitutes for him a sort of vested interest; and the impossibility of performing in foreign countries the various offices connected with the national system of ancestor-worship.

Notwithstanding these deterrent factors, Chinamen have emigrated in such numbers that, although their absence is not felt at home, their presence has exerted a powerful influence abroad. Thus in the East the Chinaman is found in ever-increasing numbers in the Malay Peninsula, in Java, in Siam, in Borneo, in New Guinea, in the Philippine Islands, in Burmah, in Sumatra, and in Mauritius; whilst he has penetrated as far West as Hawaii, Central and South America, and the West Indies.

There is every reason to suppose that, throughout the Tropics, possibly excepting India, the Chinaman, even should he continue to emigrate in no greater force than hitherto, will gradually supersede all the native races. The reason for this is not far to seek. The one thing in which Tropical countries are deficient is an effective labor supply. The economic history of the Tropics, during the past three centuries, is largely a narrative of the efforts made by the land owners to secure labor for the development of their properties. The autochthonous races were utilized, until they disappeared under the strain of steady and severe toil; then slavery was tried and discarded; and then followed various systems of imported contract labor. We find that the labor supply of the Tropics, subsequently to the abolition of slavery, has consisted of free Negroes, for the most part quite unreliable, and of East Indian and Chinese imported contract laborers. These imported contract laborers, either East Indian or Chinese, were introduced, and in most instances are still being introduced, into Jamaica, Trinidad, Martinique, St. Lucia, Guadeloupe, British,

Dutch and French Guiana, Cuba, Peru, Hawaii, the Fiji Islands, Natal, Mauritius, the Straits Settlements, Java and Queensland, and a great number of unindentured Chinese have gone to the Philippine Islands.

As there is no possibility of white labor being utilized in most parts of the Tropics, the choice lies between the Chinaman, the Negro and the East Indian. But the Chinaman is, under all circumstances, a better laborer than either of the others; for he has infinitely more industry than the former and infinitely more strength and staying power than the latter. So great is his superiority that the Tropical planter would prefer a good supply of unindentured Chinamen to East Indians bound by contract.

I have not been able to secure any reliable statistics exhibiting the effect which Chinese imported contract labor has had upon the population of the countries employing it; but the following figures, relating to the population of British Guiana, show in a striking manner the effect of East Indian immigration.

COMPOSITION OF POPULATION OF BRITISH GUIANA.

	Per cent. Census of	Per cent. Census of	Per cent. Census of	Per cent. Estimate
	1831	1861.	1891.	1901.
White.....	3.22	7.77	6.13	6.00
Black.....	96.78	75.48	53.45	44.87
East Indian.....	00.00	14.98	38.98	47.13
Others.....	00.00	1.77	1.39	2.00
	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

In the above figures, aboriginal Indians, of whom there are about 10,000, are not taken into account, and mixed races are counted as Black, thus giving the Blacks a liberal estimate.

It is seen that the whites scarcely hold their own, notwithstanding the fact that many thousands, chiefly Portuguese, have been imported as laborers; the Blacks, on the other hand, have fallen in number from 96.78 per cent. to 44.87 per cent. of the population, while the East Indians have increased in forty years from 14.98 per cent. to 47.13 per cent.

If we consider the peculiar character of the Chinese people, it cannot be doubted that they would have a more radical influence on the population of the Tropical countries to which they emigrate than that exerted by the East Indians, and, bearing this in mind, we see that the prospect of the Tropical regions becoming Chinese socially, at least, is not unreasonable.

Still, leaving out of the question a political expansion of

China, it may be profitable to inquire whether there is any reasonable likelihood that the well-known aversion of the Chinese to emigration might be increased to such an extent as to operate as a complete check.

In order to determine this, we must inquire into the causes which lie at the back of Chinese emigration. Broadly speaking, Chinese emigrants may be divided into four classes:

1. Criminals escaping from justice;
2. Those who are immediately threatened with persecution from the high officials of the Southern Provinces, or who have already suffered such persecution;
3. Those whose friends or relatives have emigrated, and have carried or sent back the news of the protection of the fruits of industry to be found in most countries governed by white men;
4. Those who are influenced by the pictures of the prosperity and freedom of Christian countries, which the missionaries paint for their following.

It is thus seen that, if the Chinese Government were conducted on the principles which guide Western nations, if, in short, a vigorous reform movement were carried out, the motives for emigration would no longer be strong enough to overcome the Chinaman's preference for staying at home; and he would then remain in China, and worship the bones of his ancestors, until, perhaps a century hence, the population began to press on the means of subsistence.

When emigration became an economic necessity, China might and probably would expand socially without pressing on over-sea territory. A glance at the map shows that the natural outlet for Chinese expansion is in Thibet, Burmah, Cochin-China and Siam; for, although Russia may press on China from the north, no formidable competitor exists to the south, where France is helpless in Indo-China; where Siam could not, if it would, prevent an influx of Chinese, and where England in Burmah and in the Malay Peninsula is prepared to accept the Chinaman as an immigrant.

Under the foregoing conditions, it is clear that the Chinese saturation of the Tropics may be conceivably delayed for a considerable period, and that the stress of a possible Chinese commercial competition would thus be lessened to the extent of saving the Tropical and sub-Tropical markets from becoming Chinese

in the nature of their requirements, at any rate in the very near future.

Up to this point, we have considered the question of Chinese race supremacy in the Tropics, on the supposition that the natural course of events would not be interfered with by the adoption of a definite policy of expansion by the Chinese Government. But it is by no means beyond the range of possibility that China may, at no distant date, embark on a policy of territorial expansion; indeed, there are many reasons for supposing that, given the necessary conditions, China would certainly look for an expansion of her political influence in new directions.

If those who predict the complete political dismemberment of China are correct in their forecast there will be, of course, no Chinese national policy in the future; but I think that there is ample reason to doubt the correctness of this view.

Two powerful factors combine to insure the endurance of China as a political unit; one is the hostile attitude of the United States and of Great Britain toward any wholesale cutting up of the Empire, and the other is that, throughout the Central and Southern Provinces, the climatic conditions will always render impossible a permanent occupation by white men. It may, indeed, be doubted whether the United States and Great Britain, although they might forbid the permanent occupation of Chinese territory by France, Germany or Italy, would go so far as to forcibly oppose the southern extension of Russia's Siberian boundary, or the acquisition of Korea by Japan. But the utmost that is at all likely to happen is that Russia should occupy Manchuria and Mongolia, and that Japan should take possession of the Korean Peninsula.

If this should occur China would certainly seek compensation to the South, where from climatic reasons no European race could hope successfully to resist her advance, and the absorption of Cochin-China, and more remotely of Siam and Southern Tibet, would follow.

Even if we conceive China as shorn of her Northern Provinces and for a time checked in her southern advance, we still have a great Chinese nation, at least capable of a definite foreign policy. It seems probable that, whatever may be the immediate issue of the present situation, the China which remains intact will develop into a formidable military and naval power.

The allies have encountered with surprise a military China very different from the one engaged in the Chino-Japanese war of 1894-1895; and it is reasonably certain that recent experiences will be followed by an enormous increase of the naval and military forces of the Empire. With 400,000,000 people to draw from, with the revenue which a reformed Administration could procure from such a population, and with unlimited natural resources of the country at her disposal, China could easily make herself the dominant power of the Far East.

In this position, what would her policy be? Would she be content to accept the loss of Manchuria and Mongolia as an accomplished fact, or would she embark on a campaign of reprisal?

In any event, the industrial development which may be expected to follow even a moderate degree of internal reform, if accompanied by the adoption of Western industrial methods, will soon set China at work seeking foreign markets. If these are accorded her she may, in the absence of an aggressive national policy, look forward to a long period of peaceful progress, relieved by an overflow of population to the south, unaccompanied by any extension of her political influence. But if she finds her goods shut out from Japan, from Russia and French Asia, from the Philippines, and from the Dutch East Indies, China may be forced to follow the example of Great Britain and occupy large tracts of land for trade purposes, which otherwise she might have been content to see under the political control of other nations.

The prospect of a powerful and united China, driven, through the narrow commercial policy of the more civilized Powers, into a fight for markets, is not a pleasant one; and it is doubtful whether, having secured them, she would select to follow the lead of Great Britain by throwing them open to the world, or to take a leaf out of the book of France and practically close her colonial ports to all foreign merchandise.

ALLEYNE IRELAND.